

The Democratic Budget works towards elimination of the deficit, paring it down dramatically in the next five years, and thus saving us from huge interest payments needed to service the national debt.

We pay for all this by not extending the tax cuts for those earning over \$200,000. According to the Urban Institute-Brookings Institution Tax Policy Center this would provide \$223.5 billion between calendar year 2005 and 2010.

The tax cuts were originally promoted as temporary—if extended, they will cost \$1.5 trillion over the next 10 years. Coupled with the costly challenges in Iraq and Afghanistan and the need to invest in our future, the tax cuts prove an unbalanced approach that creates huge deficits and shortchanges America's priorities.

It is time to seize the opportunity to restore sanity and candor to the budget process and to pass a budget that promotes the security and values of the American people without imposing increased social inequities and crushing debt to future generations.

IN RECOGNITION OF CHARLES G. WELLS, JR.

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 6, 2005

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, Warrant Officer 1 Charles G. Wells, Jr., 32, originally of Montgomery, Alabama, died on March 30, 2005, in Iraq. Warrant Officer Wells was assigned to the Marine Forces Reserve's 6th Motor Transport Battalion, 4th Force Service Support Group of Orlando, Florida, and according to initial reports died in action from an improvised explosive device. His survivors include his wife Freda Nicole and his daughter Cierra; his mother Orlean Johnson Wells of Montgomery, Alabama; and his father Charles Gary Wells, Sr., also of Montgomery.

Charles Wells, Jr. was a proud Marine and eager to serve his country, Mr. Speaker. He willingly signed up for a third tour of duty in Iraq after having just completed his second. Back home, Mr. Wells had planned a career serving the community as a firefighter, yet dutifully left behind his family and loved ones to serve our country overseas.

Words cannot express the sense of sadness we have for his family, and for the gratitude our country feels for his service. Warrant Officer Wells died serving not just the United States, but the entire cause of liberty, on a noble mission to help spread the cause of freedom in Iraq and liberate an oppressed people from tyrannical rule. He was a true American.

We will forever hold him closely in our hearts, and remember his sacrifice and that of his family as a remembrance of his bravery and willingness to serve. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the House's remembrance on this mournful day.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF THE HONORABLE TOM BEVILL

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 6, 2005

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, the Fourth District of Alabama, and indeed the entire state, recently lost a dear friend, and I rise today to honor him and pay tribute to his memory.

Congressman Tom Bevill was a devoted family man and dedicated public servant throughout his entire life, and has the distinction of being the longest-serving congressman ever to come from Alabama. I am certain many in this chamber recall with great fondness and vividness their memories of working closely with this tireless advocate for the needs of his constituents and his state.

Born on March 27, 1921, and a native of Walker County, Alabama, Congressman Bevill spent his childhood in the mining community of Townley, witnessing the ravages of the Great Depression on his family, his friends, and his neighbors. He was a 1943 graduate of the University of Alabama School of Commerce and Business Administration. Within a short time following his graduation, he joined the United States Army and rose to the rank of captain, leading one of the units which went ashore in France on June 6, 1944. Ultimately, Congressman Bevill retired from the U.S. Army Reserves with the rank of lieutenant colonel. In 1948, he completed his legal studies at the University of Alabama School of Law and embarked on an 18-year career practicing law in Jasper, Alabama.

All told, Congressman Bevill spent 38 years in public office. Elected to the Alabama State House of Representatives in 1958, he served for eight years before embarking on a campaign which would ultimately lead to his winning the seat for the Seventh (later Fourth) Congressional District at the end of 1966. He would go on to serve 15 terms in this chamber and become one of the most effective and well-respected advocates for the state of Alabama ever to serve in the United States Congress.

Congressman Bevill became such an effective representative for his district and for the state—and became such an influential member of the House of Representatives that he was often referred to as "Alabama's third senator." Indeed, the work he accomplished during his three decades in this chamber, particularly as a member of the full Committee on Appropriations and, for nine terms, as chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, had important and long-lasting effects on the economic growth of the state of Alabama.

To this day, signs of his influence and successful efforts on behalf of his district and his state can be found throughout Alabama, and his name has been attached to some of the most important public centers anywhere in the state. These include the Tom Bevill Chair of Law at the University of Alabama, the Tom Bevill Energy, Mineral, and Material Science Research Building, also at the University of Alabama, and the Tom Bevill Center for Advanced Manufacturing Technology at Gadsden.

In addition to his long and successful career in the House of Representatives, Congress-

man Bevill received numerous awards and citations in recognition of his distinguished career. Along with honorary doctorates he received from Livingston University, the University of North Alabama, and Troy State University, he was inducted into both the Alabama Academy of Honor and the Alabama Senior Citizens Hall of Fame.

Perhaps more than any other two projects, Congressman Bevill should be remembered for his work on two of the most significant transportation projects in Alabama history: the Memphis-to-Birmingham highway known as "Corridor X," and the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway. "Corridor X," when completed, will provide a vital link between the two cities in Alabama and Tennessee and will provide tremendous benefits and incentive for further economic development in north Alabama. The Waterway has already provided incalculable benefits for Alabama's economy and has resulted in thousands of jobs for men and women throughout our state.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in remembering a dedicated public servant and long-time advocate for the state of Alabama, a man whose significant impact and dedication to the needs and interests of his constituents will be felt for many years to come. Congressman Bevill, who was preceded in death in 2001 by his beloved wife of 58 years, Lou, will be deeply missed by his family—his daughters, Susan Bevill Livingston and Patricia Bevill Warren, his son, Don Bevill, his six grandchildren, and his three great-grandchildren—as well as the countless friends he leaves behind. Our thoughts and prayers are with them all at this difficult time.

TAUNTON GAZETTE DOCUMENTS THE VALUE OF CDBG

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 6, 2005

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, the Taunton Gazette recently ran a very comprehensive series documenting the social and economic importance of the Community Development Block Grant Program. Taunton, Massachusetts, which I am privileged to represent, is a very good example of how when this program is well administered, as it has been in Taunton, it can be of such enormous benefit in a variety of ways to its citizens. Joanna James of the Taunton Gazette deserves a great deal of credit for her thorough and insightful reporting, and the Taunton Gazette deserves a great deal of credit for devoting the space to this story. Too often today people are given only snippets of information about important public policy issues. The Taunton Gazette's in depth exploration of how the CDBG Program works in that city is a tribute to the program itself, and to its continued importance, to the people in the City of Taunton led by Mayor Nunes who administer it, to Joanna James for the quality of her reportage and to the Taunton Gazette for giving so much space to such an important public policy issue.

I find it hard to believe that anyone could read this series of articles and still feel that this is a program ought to be substantially diminished, as the President's budget would do.

(By Joanna James)

TAUNTON.—President George W. Bush's recommendation to dismantle the Community

Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) in his proposed budget would filter down the federal bureaucracy in no time and aim directly at the heart of each community nationwide, according to local and state elected officials.

David Bachrach, director of the Mayor's Office of Community Development (MOCD), predicts a looming crisis targeting the community, whether or not the CDBG program is cut. Taunton received \$1.2 million from its funding for 2004.

If the program isn't eliminated, then the question will be how much funding will be allocated to it, according to Bachrach. Bachrach said if it's significantly cut that will cause unnecessary Congressional pressure to take money out of other programs.

"These are huge resources that only government can will upon the community," Bachrach said. "It's a shame that the cuts are even a suggestion."

Bush proposed to eliminate the community funding program and replace it under the Department of Commerce while cutting its funding by 35 percent. The CDBG aids statewide municipalities with low income housing, public enhancements such as park and street renovations and a plethora of other community resources left to the discretion at the local level.

Mayor Robert G. Nunes said the CDBG is a "tremendous program" that will have dire effects on Taunton if it is cut. Nunes said over the last 10 years, the program has provided \$15 million to Taunton. The funds have been used on community issues such as housing, public safety, infrastructure, parks, roads and the hiring of police officers.

"There's a national, bipartisan effort from mayors lobbying heavy on this," Nunes said. Last week Nunes attended a roundtable discussion on the CDBG cuts in Boston with seven other Massachusetts mayors hosted by Rep. Michael E. Capuano, D-Mass.

"We discussed the impact the cuts would have across the country," Nunes said, "not just our communities."

As the former mayor of Somerville, Capuano spoke from first-hand experience on how the CDBG funding was critically important to the quality of life in communities.

"President Bush said in his State of the Union address that he wants to help the faith-based and community groups . . . yet he's cutting the very programs that help kids stay away from drugs, provide housing and opportunity," Capuano said.

Bush's CDBG proposal fueled mayors nationwide to take a stance against it because the CDBG program offers them flexibility to decide where to direct the funding at a local level.

Locally, Nunes is working with the person who utilizes the CDBG program the most. Bachrach's Office of Community Development is the second largest in the city to receive federal level funds (the first is Title I education).

"The CDBG is a significant tool," Bachrach said, "It's hard to fathom what will happen without the funds."

Currently the CDBG is funding 12 programs under the Office of Community Development; whereas if the grant was eliminated Bachrach would have to competitively find 12 separate grants toward neighborhood revitalization, head starts for small businesses, elder services, police detail and teachers—to name a few.

Over the past three years, the Office of Community Development has used the CDBG to benefit: 515 elderly, 740 single-parent households, 96 disabled persons, 348 youth and 622 families. The CDBG has also impacted Taunton's business growth and infrastructure improvements.

"We're going to have to reevaluate the direction of money," Nunes said, "less money,

then less money toward infrastructure and other community needs."

Although locally there has been a collective effort to prevent the cuts, Nunes said at this point there is nothing more that can be done other than wait for Congress's decision.

TAUNTON.—President George W. Bush stands firmly by tax cuts as a means to economic growth, promoting the creation of more small businesses. Yet in Bush's 2006 proposed budget he supports cutting a grant that area officials and business people say is at the heart of creating small businesses.

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) has helped many local business owners take the first step in making their dream come true from working as an employee to becoming an employer.

Over the past three years, the CDBG program has helped create 26 new local jobs, provided 10 businesses with loans totaling over \$218,000 and provided more than 30 start-up businesses with training, according to the Mayor's Office of Community Development.

Mezzaluna Deli on the Taunton Green is one of the businesses which got its start—and has also sustained itself—from the CDBG program. Holly and Harold Roderick, owners of the delicatessen, received \$25,000 from the CDBG and used its entrepreneurial workshop to learn how to create a business plan and present it for financing.

"If the city doesn't have the program, a lot of small businesses aren't going to get started," Holly said. "A lot of the new restaurants will be chains and the city will lose that little downtown business."

The Rodericks both earned bachelor's degrees from Johnson & Wales University and Harold (known as Butch) always wanted to own his own business. Holly said most banks won't finance restaurants because of the high risk involved, so they needed to get creative to find money. Holly said they attended the Taunton Entrepreneurial Workshop, which showed them how to create a business plan and helped them to apply for financing.

David Bachrach, director of the Mayor's Office of Community Development, said his office and the Southeastern Economic Development Corp. (SEED) often collaborate to get business owners started.

"Once someone is funded and business savvy, then SEED is the next step," Bachrach said.

The community development office provides funds from the CDBG program to Weir Corporation, which is a local community development organization. Weir Corp. provided the Rodericks with the first-tier help for them to get the entrepreneurial training they needed and to obtain \$25,000 for renovations.

Weir Corp. provides loans to approximately 25 small businesses per year, and training to more than 100 small businesses per year. Jill Cowie, Weir Corp. co-director, said the organization would not have been able to help in the creation of such local small businesses such as Golden Years, Ultimate Fitness or recently Dyetex without the CDBG.

"We wouldn't be able to do it anymore," Cowie said. "The CDBG is the source of our loan pool, our core funding."

Cowie said once the businesses need more than \$25,000, the risk is spread by working with SEED Corp. which will put up to 40 percent of the loan, while a bank will finance up to 50 percent.

SEED Corp. acted as a conduit for the Rodericks. The Rodericks were financed \$85,000 from SEED Corp. and Mechanics Cooperative Bank financed the rest of the \$179,900, so they could buy the property and start the business.

Mezzaluna will celebrate its third anniversary this November, and Holly said they

have seen a 40 percent increase in sales from last year. Holly pondered about the time when she and Harold couldn't find any bank to finance them, and how the CDBG program was the only way they got started and spurred their success.

"If I went out of business tomorrow a lot of people would say, 'where am I going to eat lunch now,'" Holly said. "I really hope they keep the program in effect."

Bachrach said there has been a philosophical change with the Bush administration in terms of helping the community.

"For Bush, community problems can be met with the open market," Bachrach said. "The administration no longer sees the need for the private and public working together."

The business collaboration by these different venues from the CDBG program provides sound community investments and creates opportunity in the community for more jobs, according to Bachrach.

"This is beyond myself because I have plenty of opportunity for work, it's the people we serve who don't have these options," Bachrach said. "It's going to be heart-breaking."

FUNDS THAT HELP REPAVE STREETS MAY FACE ELIMINATION

(By Joanna James)

TAUNTON.—One local official worries that motorists who drive through city streets will think bombs have been dropped and the streets were never repaved.

The official—David Bachrach, director of the Mayor's Community Development Office—now fears that the potential loss of federal funding for repair projects may make the situation worse.

For the coming summer, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money will provide \$1 million toward repaving roads and other infrastructure projects. Yet the federal funding may be eliminated if President George Bush's proposed budget is approved by Congress.

Even with more than a million dollars from the CDBG going toward roads and other infrastructure projects, city officials said borrowing will be necessary to repair potholes and repave streets.

Mayor Robert G. Nunes said he is confident the allocated CDBG money will remain for the upcoming projects, but he is nervous about the future.

"It [CDBG elimination] will have a devastating impact in terms of infrastructure," Nunes said. "The CDBG supplements operating projects for the next five years."

Forty-three percent of all Taunton streets need resurfacing, according to statistics provided by the Department of Public Works (DPW). In 2004, the CDBG paid \$360,000 toward local DPW projects, and \$640,000 for 2002 and 2003 improvements. For just the coming summer, CDBG will provide \$1 million for city projects.

Frank Nichols, director of the Department of Public Works, said the city already has a hard time filling potholes, and the situation will grow worse if the extra help from the CDBG was lost.

"Ultimately the city would have to come up with the money for the loss and I don't know from where," Nichols said. "Absolutely, it helps relieve some of the issues we would have to deal with."

Bachrach said Weir, High and Adam streets are three of the 11 streets where CDBG money helped pay for 8,000 linear feet of road reconstruction and 5,000 linear feet of new water lines over the last five years.

However Bachrach said the Whittenton Area is in dire need of road and water line reconstruction and is next on the list of projects.

"If you drove the streets you'd think they accidentally dropped bombs in this area," Bachrach said. However Whittenton is an upcoming project site funded by the CDBG.

"Once it's done they're going to be dancing in the streets," Bachrach said.

Debbie Maloney, owner of End of the Road T-shirts on Weir Street, said she is grateful Weir Street was repaved from CDBG funds. Maloney's business is also one of the local small businesses which received \$25,000 start-up help from CDBG funds.

"This road is really good compared to others," Maloney said. "I know I wouldn't be happy if it [CDBG] was cut, a lot of my customers complain the roads of Taunton are disgusting."

Other types of infrastructure completed from CDBG funds were the Paul Bunker Drive basketball courts, the Hopewell pool and 15,000 sq. ft. of new sidewalks including Park Street.

IN JEOPARDY

(By Joanna James)

TAUNTON.—Here are some faces hidden behind the numbers. Here are some people's stories hidden behind the political speak.

Local residents and officials said they would be heartbroken if services provided by the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) were eliminated. If Congress accepts President George W. Bush's 2006 budget proposal to eliminate the CDBG—three-year-olds, to high school students, to senior citizens—will feel the loss and city officials said they couldn't bear the burden.

David Bachrach, director of the Mayor's Office of Community Development (MOCD), said 348 youths have benefited from the CDBG over the last three years.

Project Achieve received approximately \$25,000 this year towards MCAS tutoring and providing after school jobs to 17- and 18-year-old students who may be the only bread-winners in their families.

Leonard Hull, budget coordinator for Project Achieve, said many of the students Project Achieve helps are born into difficult environments that they had no control over and can easily lose hope.

"We're trying to help them believe that the American dream is still a possibility," Hull said. "They can make something of themselves, and in the long run the community gets a lot more back."

Three students—who work two hours, five days per week after attending full-time classes at Taunton High School and receive MCAS tutoring a few hours per week—said they now believe in the American dream because of Project Achieve.

Yarelis Rivera, 17, works at JC Penney in customer service and hopes to be a nurse or flight attendant one day after graduating from a community college.

"Once you set a goal and you have people to help you, you can make it come true," Rivera said, regarding her experience with Project Achieve.

Cheryl Bileau, 17, helps her mother by working after school at Redcats U.S.A./ Chadwicks and babysitting her cousin and younger siblings. Since Bileau's father died last Christmas from a massive heart attack she said it has been "tough" on the family, but she has been surrounded by supportive people from Project Achieve.

Once Bileau graduates, she has been offered a full-time job from Redcats. She said she is saving her money to attend Rob Roy Academy to become a cosmetologist.

Edwina Orelus, 19, came to the U.S. from Haiti in 2003 to conquer the American dream, and from the CDBG funding, her parents' dream for their daughter to get an education may come true.

Orelus first took the MCAS a few months after she came to the U.S. and failed from not knowing the English language well. Presently two years after, Orelus is more confident speaking English, and if she passes the MCAS, she has already been accepted to a community college in Staten Island, N.Y.

All three girls said they would be very disappointed if the CDBG was cut because it has funded a program that they said "everyone deserves the extra help and support of."

In a full year, the CDBG funds the Department of Human Services with \$81,000, which has helped 515 elderly people over the past three years, according to the MOCD.

Anne Bisson, assistant director of the department of human services for 21 years, said almost 100 percent of the program's elders are low income and would be devastated if the program was cut.

"They really rely on the staff and services. Some have no family or their spouse died and they need some support," Bisson said.

Lois Meunier, 71, moved from her mobile home after her husband died in 1999 and now lives in Caswell Grove Housing. Meunier has no children or local family and said the highlight of her week is the visit from her caseworker, Betty Charette.

"She's just so wonderful," Meunier said. "She's a Godsend for me."

Charette is one of the five caseworkers who go to senior citizens' homes to keep them company, talk and help them by filling out insurance forms, meals, or in Meunier's case, getting her hair done.

Other than the case workers, the CDBG also funds a visiting nurse to help with medicines and a computer center for elderly to use the Internet.

If the CDBG stopped funding the Department of Human Services, the case workers and nurse wouldn't exist anymore.

"I would feel very badly about it [if Charette's position was cut]," Meunier said. "I just look forward to it so much, she's been such a comfort for me."

More than 622 families and 740 single parent households have used the CDBG funds over the past three years, according to the MOCD.

The literacy program for families with educational risk provides parents with the confidence to know they can be their children's best teachers, according to Debbi Jenkins, program's coordinator.

Home visitors bring educational toys, books, puzzles and other tools to teach children shapes, numbers and how to appreciate reading and learning. Every other week the parents get to keep whatever educational toy is brought to continue teaching the kids.

Jill Humann saw how much the program helped her daughter and wanted her son James, 3, to get the same experience. Both children were slow to speak and express themselves.

However, after their home visitor Lisa Smith has been coming to their house for two half-hour visits per week, the children have excelled.

"They really learn a lot, I love it," Humann said. "I think it's [CDBG funding towards the program] the best thing for kids. They'd be lost without it."

Humann said she has learned so much from Smith that she continues the lessons with her children when Smith isn't around.

Smith said when she first started lessons with the three-year-old, she faced behavioral issues and had to make him trust her.

"He loves social praise, how smart he is and how he wants to show Mommy all his work," Smith said. "Now he's conversing and he's doing so well, I'm so proud of him."

Bachrach said these success stories are just a few examples of how the CDBG has impacted the community.

Both the House of Representatives and the Senate passed resolutions to reinstate the CDBG program from receiving such a powerful, national grass roots advocacy.

However, Bachrach said the real advocacy must begin now that the Appropriations Committee decides how to focus the funds.

Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., will attend next Tuesday's City Council meeting to discuss the CDBG program.

TAUNTON.—Congressman Barney Frank, D-Mass., congratulated and thanked city officials and residents last night for helping save the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program from elimination under President George W. Bush's 2006 budget proposal.

Frank said a nation-wide, bipartisan effort over the past few months has secured the CDBG program while proving "democracy is still very alive." "The efforts of people from all over the country made this happen, and I can tell you right now this vote is going to come out the right way," Frank said.

Frank said more than 50 senators from both parties signed a March 2 letter to the Senate Appropriations Committee asking to save the CDBG program and keep its current funding level.

The people who filled the standing-room-only City Council chambers last night and worked hard to keep the program alive heard what they hoped for from Frank.

David Bachrach, director of the Mayor's Office of Community Development, has worked tirelessly to save the CDBG program and said it was hard for him to put into words how happy he was.

"This is a huge relief. I'm totally psyched," Bachrach said. Local residents stood up and gave testimonials on how they benefited from the grant program.

After buying a city home that was in need of major renovations, Jeanne-Marie Beatty was laid off from her job. She had nowhere to turn and no money. Beatty saw a CDBG advertisement and said it was "too good to be true" when she realized the program would help her finish her house.

"I couldn't be happier. I'm thrilled the program will continue," Beatty said. "It's a win-win situation for so many people and it all goes back to the community."

Frank said the administration had no horror stories to tell about the CDBG program, because there were none. Rather, Frank said the only reason President Bush proposed the CDBG cut is because the Bush realized he has to reduce the deficit, yet he's committed to tax cuts and the war, "so to do all three he can't."

"It shows the president's philosophy that tax cuts to the wealthy and his commitment to the war in Iraq come first and everything else needs to get cut," Frank said before he spoke at the council meeting. "The president is denying that we have value on our city programs."

Some other city programs funded by the CDBG that local residents spoke about were the business training and lending programs for small business owners. City students also benefited from Project Achieve through the Taunton Area School to Career program.

Bonnie Brown, 17, and Cheryl Bileau, 17, both juniors at Taunton High School, work after school with provided transportation and get MCAS tutoring because the CDBG partly funds Project Achieve. Frank said people should not settle in just yet. City programs suffered from Section 8 cutbacks last year, and Frank said keeping the CDBG should not be used as a bargaining chip to hurt other programs.

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ATTORNEY JOAQUIN L. RODRIGUEZ

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 6, 2005

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize attorney Joaquin L. Rodriguez for his many years of service and civic involvement.

Born and raised in Uvalde, Texas, Mr. Rodriguez first attended Southwest Texas Junior College before transferring to University of Texas at Austin and attaining a B.A. in Government. Later, Mr. Rodriguez attended the Texas Tech School of Law and obtained a

Doctor of Jurisprudence from the University of Texas School of Law.

After passing the Texas Bar in 1982, Mr. Rodriguez started his legal career and quickly became partner at Knickerbocker, Cowan, Heredia & Rodriguez law firm in Eagle Pass, TX. Over the years of his career, Mr. Rodriguez has mainly dealt within the area of personal injury and the representation of Plaintiffs.

In 1997, Mr. Rodriguez became a founding partner at Rodriguez & Muniz-Berain Law Firm and worked there for 11 years. Afterwards, Mr. Rodriguez found Joaquin L. Rodriguez & Associates in 1999 and has since been working there, serving the citizens of Eagle Pass.

While living and working in Eagle Pass, TX, Mr. Rodriguez has continued to involve himself and serve in the civic community. Among

his involvements, Mr. Rodriguez has served as Chairman of the Eagle Pass Housing Authority, Legal Counsel of the City of Eagle Pass Library Foundation, and as Advisory Board Member on a number of local Texas banks. Mr. Rodriguez was also elected as Mayor of Eagle Pass with an impressive 94 percent vote in May, 2002.

Among his honors and awards, Mr. Rodriguez was distinguished as "Professional of the Year" in 1999 by the Eagle Pass Business Journal. He also became a Keeton Fellow of the University of Texas School of Law Alumni Association in 2001.

Mr. Speaker, it has been my pleasure today to recognize the accomplishments and services of Mr. Joaquin L. Rodriguez.